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ABSTRACT

The "process option" approach for speech students should be expanded through the development of a learning context in which (1) topic development replaces last minute subject selection through the spoken equivalent of freewriting, (2) the revision process of writing occurs in preparation for delivered speeches, (3) student/teacher interaction maintains a sense of authorship for the student, (4) peer response carries the same importance as teacher response, and (5) the content, form, and nature of the spoken communication is determined by student need, rather than by prescription and formula. Writing pedagogy is shifting dramatically from student-centered instruction toward process-centered instruction, thus effecting a similar change in speech pedagogy, which is usually teacher oriented. Research in process-oriented writing instruction should include essays and responsive commentary on the subtleties of the learning process, rather than relying entirely on statistical data. In addition, the similarities between writing and speaking should be recognized. Some research has been done to establish the theoretical framework for a process centered approach to speech instruction and to explore some specific applications to the discipline of speech pedagogy. (Statistics on communication education and on college composition and communication are included.) (JD)

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A PROCESS OPTION FOR SPEECH PEDAGOGY

by Donald Arenz*

I have always been responsive to a student-centered approach to teaching. One of my earliest college experiences occurred in 1961 at Clinton Community College where I was a part-time student. I had a speech teacher named Dean Travis whom I instinctively admired. After an entire semester of "learning" to give speeches before the class with minimal direction from him, he explained his philosophy of teaching: "When I was starting out as a teacher, I tried to get up in front of the room and 'teach' speech. I tried that for six years and finally decided it couldn't be done. After that, I settled for 'setting up conditions under which students could learn to speak.'" I'm not sure if Dean Travis had read Carl Rogers or if the idea of non-directive teaching occurred to him by direct relevation, but, at that moment, what I had sensed intuitively about my learning style was communicated to me directly. What Stanley Gunn, who began to "set up conditions" for me to begin to learn piano at age four and Robert Drake, who presided non-directively every morning at 8:30 in the typing room at De Soto Union Free High School of De Soto, Wisconsin, showed me about learning had now been explained to me by a speech teacher.

On the other hand, it is my impression that speech teachers as a group can be the most directive, formulaic, teacher-oriented, product-centered educators that I have ever encountered. As a speech student and a speech teacher, I have witnessed textbooks, slogans (the 3 t's), forensic coaches, teachers and professors, the advice of most of whom can be characterized as: Do this! Do that!

Recently, I have become very intrigued by the differences I have found generally between those who teach speech and those who teach writing. I learned of these differences as a result of becoming a rhetoric teacher at the University of Iowa, from reading Peter Elbow's book, Writing With Power, and many of his articles, and then being

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introduced in depth to further elaboration of the new paradigm for teaching writing by many of those researchers whose works I encountered in a course I have taken in Research on Writing.[1]

Granted, all those who teach writing are not the epitome of the nondirective approach. And many of those who claim to be student-centered are more formulaic than they claim to be.[2] But, my considered impression is that there is a range of choices for instructors of writing that remains consistent with their own academic tradition that is not readily present for instructors of speech.

So I begin this research with a family of simple but true questions: What is there, if anything, about the research in/on writing that has encouraged such a variety of teaching approaches in writing, while the teaching of speech has been stuck in the formulaic approach? Are insights to be found in the existing research or perhaps in the way the research is conducted? Or perhaps in the attitudes approaching or considering the research? In short, what can the speech discipline learn from the writing discipline about research questions that might some day expand choices for its students and teachers?

In order for such a study to be meaningful, it is necessary to establish that we are dealing with activities that are similar enough to establish validity for any conclusion that may be drawn. Speech, it is said, is different; so different that we inherently emphasize product over process. Of course, if we were not dealing with a similar activity it would be nonsensical to consider adapting procedures from one to the other. This qualifier is so potent that I will attempt to refute it before outlining further steps in my study.

A speech, it is said, is a product, whereas a writing is one temporary manifestation of the writing process, which can readily be revised. This strikes many of my acquaintances as such a given that they seem to automatically yield to teaching speech from cookbook procedures, providing the same outlines that Aristotle and Cicero contributed. One of the strongest bases for this argument seems to be the very strange idea that, as Nancy Sommers states, "The spoken word cannot be revised."[3] She attempts to support this with a reference to Roland Barthes:

> A word cannot be retracted, except precisely by saying that one retracts it. To cross out here is to add; if I want to erase what I have just said, I cannot do it without showing the eraser itself (I must say: 'or rather...' 'I expressed myself badly...'): paradoxically, it is ephemeral speech which is indelible, not monumental writing. All that one can do in the case of a spoken utterance is to tack on another utterance.[4]

Barthes is not content to leave the charge this bland. He argues, in the full article from which Sommers quotes, that if the speaker attempts to qualify what s/he had done, s/he "...ruins the very idea of a message..."[5] Speech, to Barthes, because of its irreversibility, is inherently authoritarian. Spoken, it is law. Excused (deleted by another remark) it is weak: "...the imperfect orator hopes to render less disagreeable the role that makes every speaker a kind of policeman."[6] The speaker, akin to the teacher for Barthes, is an authoritarian or nothing, as if there were no moderating options in the relationship to speech: "Nothing to be done: language is always a matter of force, to speak is to exercise a will for power; in the realm of speech there is no innocence, no safety."[7]

What Sommers and Barthes seem to be saying is one cannot erase what has already been said, except by saying that you are doing such a canceling. There are many approaches to thinking about revising speech that diverge from Barthes' merely digital approach. Perhaps the smallest of these is that speech stored in the memories of listeners is subject to modification from the existing content of these memories, that is, instant revision as an ongoing phenomenon, hardly indelible, varying with each individual listener.

Beyond that, to suggest that speech is not revisable because it is not reversible or erasable suggests a very narrow definition of revision. Every individual utterance is not separate from (or antagonistic to) previous utterances, but rather, a part of an ever-increasing totality (when framed as a conversation, a speech, or an ongoing speech relationship). Rather than saying speech is not revisable, it would be more accurate to say that it is not divisible. Its very linearity (one word after another, building on one another) supports its indivisibility, ensuring revision. That is, even though speech is linear in

the sense that one word follows another, and that we do not seem to be going back and forth as we consider the oral message, the totality of the communication as it rests in the memory of the listener can be considered simultaneously, just as writing can be considered simultaneously. What we say always provides a new context for what we have said. Consciously or unconsciously, we are always modifying and influencing what we have said before. A speaker can adapt to changing constraints of a situation and an audience by explaining, illustrating, subtly shifting emphasis, introducing related phrases with new connotations relating the "sense that" or the "perspective from which" a remark was meant, injecting silences after remarks which strike him or her at the instant of needing more emphasis than another previous (supposedly, to Barthes, indelible remark, making accompanying nonverbal expressions that indicate the degree of importance of a current remark in relation to the importance of a previous remark, which cannot escape because it has already been said. Very simply, two words, sentences, or paragraphs do not remain the same when a third is added. What is received by, and stored in the memory of, the listener, is the totality of the discourse, the parts of which interact with all other elements of the discourse in listener-specific ways. The fact that the spoken word cannot escape (which makes it eminently revisable) does not mean it is indelible. Nor is its revision always an afterthought, as Sommers suggests.[8] An adroit speaker, with strategies like those listed above in mind, can surely posit statements that s/he judges to have a variety of possible receptions by an audience, for modifications later in the speech.

Furthermore, revision can occur from speech to speech. It was commonly reported that Richard Nixon gave the same version in 1968 of one set speech. Ronald Reagan has done much of the same since 1964, when he made his initial address in support of Goldwater. It is not an "afterthought" to give a speech in contemplation of future similar speeches to come, certain to be modified in a new situation.

If speech, including public, stand-up speeches, can be looked at as more than an indelible "product," that is, as an ongoing process, we realize we are considering an activity much more similar to the writing process than is often acknowledged. There is more process to the act of public speaking than is normally recognized. As described

above, the process occurs before, during, and after the delivery of the speech itself, and in moving a basic speech from situation A to situation B.

Establishing that public speaking can be viewed as a process is important for two reasons. If speaking, especially public speaking, is a process, it can optimally be taught as a process. For example, if a student is bound to an outline, s/he cannot be expected to take advantage of revising what s/he says during a speech based on the assessment of feedback received from the audience and a changing reaction to the speaking situation. Nor will students be as likely to be afforded the advantages of process instruction that could be gained from such activities as workshopping parts of a speech before a group of peers,[9] using the information from them to revise the speech, and various post speech activities, such as reflecting on what went well and what would be done differently in a revision of the speech next time.

Secondly, if speaking, like writing, is a communication process, it is reasonable that research in one area would benefit research in the other. Both the existing body of research on writing and research on speaking and possible future directions for research in speech are subject of my interest. That is, surveying the current body of research in each area may cast light on the contemporary inclination for writing to be taught as process and speech to be taught as product.

In an initial perusal of the literature on speech and writing pedagogy, I have gained many interesting impressions that may eventually help achieve the basic purpose of this study, namely, to provide students of speech the option of developing their competence via the process approach, which reflects the speech activity itself.

1. Speech pedagogy tends to emerge as teacher-centered; writing pedagogy as student-centered.

In an early article by Donald C. Bryant, he states:

> In spite of the inheritance of academic worth which we in speech have received from our predecessors, the question of standards may be a little more pat for teachers of speech than we choose readily to realize.

> In the nature of things, we are peculiarly vulnerable to pressure and the consequent temptation toward laxity.[10]

This expression seems particularly conscious to me that a need is felt by Bryant at this early stage (1952) to establish a pedagogical style and philosophy for speech. In subsequent remarks in the article, the flow of learning for Bryant seems to occur from teacher to student:

> I think it is bad, for example, even when I do it myself, to prescribe the prior preparation of a logical outline for a speech, but to settle in the end (reluctantly, no doubt, and with a reproachful remark on the side) for no outline at all, or for a pretty pattern of penmanship on the page, constructed after the fact. This we extenuate, of course, by observing that the live speech didn't turn out so badly to the casual ear after all. We should either demand no outline at all, though we will of course recommend one, which alternative with learners I deplore; or we should demonstrate our belief in the value of systemative thinking, of the outlining process and of its visible evidences, even at some inconvenience to ourselves.[11]

Bryant clinches this sentiment in the following comment:

> Ignorance, shallowness, and inexperience, the characteristic faults of the young, are not per se deplorable--in the young. It is our business, the business of all teachers, to correct or mitigate these faults.[12]
>
> .....
>
> ...the demonstration of unwarranted ignorance or a quality of performance inferior to reasonable expectation should be accompanied by some palpable degree of discomfort.[13]

As a member of the textbook committee of the Rhetoric Program of the University of Iowa, I have examined, during

the past two years, a large number of recent and new textbooks on public speaking from national publishers. To a book, these texts reflect the platform of speech instruction encouraged by the product-centered approach. That is, the speech is to be produced according to rules that precede student interest, student development of a topic, the benefits of peer response; in short, today's speech textbooks pre-empt the discovery of strategies particularly suited for unique student purposes in evolving rhetorical situations.

A far different flow of communication is expressed by James Britton, for whom communication, speech and writing, proceeds from the learning self from the expressive mode[14] and moving gradually into the transactional.[15] In Britton's conception of the teaching-learning relationship the point of initiation, or centering, is maintaining focus on the student's sense of authorship. Donald Murray, who is supposed to have invented the phrase, "writing as process," urges students to "...develop your own models of the writing process...," to him a "logical sequence of activities" including collecting, focusing, ordering, drafting, and clarifying, with continual ad simultaneous interactions among the parts.[16] Peter Elbow, who trusts even more in encouraging writers to make spontaneous decisions, encourages students to take risks in their writing, to disregard formulas and rules, to risk writing badly in order to have a chance to produce that excellence of writing that will move a reader to respond.[17]

It is probably the type of response evoked that is the crucial distinction between a product and a process approach. If a communication is perceived as primarily a product, response to it will tend to be a mere accounting, often numerical, of how well that product met previous criteria. If a communication is regarded, on the other hand, as a part of a continuing process, its success will tend to be judged on the responses made by both (1) listeners and readers in light of the author's true purpose and the opportunities and constraints of a specific situation, and (2) the author's self-assessment of the match between purpose and outcome.

What is unfortunate is not that we have clear statements and quality textbooks outlining the product-centered, authoritarian approach, but rather that they have been

exclusive. There are plenty of product models in writing education, to be sure, but they do not dominate the field.

II. Writing pedagogy has begun a paradigmatic shift. Calls for change in speech pedagogy are beginning to emerge.

Maxine Hairston has claimed that writing pedagogy has entered a new paradigm[18] of process-centered instruction.[19] She acknowledges that change is gradual and often painful. There has been an impulse among writing teachers to teach in a formulaic, teacher-centered, authoritarian way. The five paragraph essay, attention to mechanics and grammar, and letter grading are familiar reminiscences of product-centered writing instruction. A classmate in a course I once took in Educational Psychology asked how long it takes for changes based on research to be put into place. The professor replied, "fifty years," explaining that, that is the length of time to overturn generations of influential teachers. Furthermore, old paradigms may never die. Carini mentions the danger of formalizing informal processes which is the case in some so-called "process" writing books.[20] Despite this, Hairston's judgment that writing pedagogy is moving powerfully to a process-centered paradigm seems well-founded. That is, there is a large body of philosophy, research, theory, and textbooks in place to support the process paradigm in writing pedagogy.

On the other hand, in a summary of several basic course surveys completed in two decades, Douglas Trank observes that there is very little discussion of the philosophy and attitudes about the content and approach to the basic college course in public speaking.[21] He cites reasons for reluctance to consider change: "The basic course has never wanted for lack of criticism but it has shown a remarkable immunity to that criticism and a singular aversion to change.[22] He cites lack of funds, lack of experienced faculty time to consider changes in the basic course, a consequent drive to conformity for efficiency's sake, and the natural tendency on the part of textbook publishers for safe successes as sources of resistance to change.

Trank frames his call for change as a request for experimentation and new alternatives. More importantly, he calls for experimentation with a philosophical framework encouraging the questioning of our basic premises about speech pedagogy and student needs.

Perhaps the reason that there is so little philosophical discussion of the nature of the learning and development of public speaking is that we tend to get stuck on the idea of public in public speaking. Our attention seems focused exclusively on the publishing, so to speak, of what we have to say. It would be as if, in writing, we called the activity "public writing"--what changes and connotations that would imply. The dwelling on the moment of publication falsely isolates that part of the process from the others. "I'm glad that's over with," is a frequent comment of speech students, whereas a writing student naturally observes, "This isn't really finished." A recognition that there is more to public speaking than giving it and getting it over with may be a beginning in a shift to a new speaking paradigm.

III. There is a greater tendency for the speech discipline to resolve issues in its pedagogical journal statistically, compared with the writing discipline. In a survey of recent issues of major pedagogical journals in each discipline, the following emerged.

COMMUNICATION EDUCATION

Year	Non-Statistically Resolved	Statistically Resolved	Percentage
1973	19	9	32
1974	12	8	40
1975	23	8	40
1976	12	8	26
1977	17	7	29
1978	14	9	39
1979	10	7	41
1980	10	10	50
1981	10	9	47
1982	9	10	53
1983	11	13	54

COLLEGE COMPOSITION AND COMMUNICATION

Year	Non-Statistically Resolved	Statistically Resolved	Percentage
1972	16	0	0
1973	25	3	11
1974	17	3	15

1975	37	1	3
1976	31	0	0
1977	22	1	4
1978	35	1	3
1979	11	1	8
1980	11	4	27
1981	14	3	18
1982	25	1	4
1983	20	3	13

This sample seems large enough and the results contrasting enough to speculate about these enormous differences in the character of issue resolution between a major speech pedagogy journal and a major writing pedagogy journal. It seems reasonable that those who believe that those who attempt to resolve their issues statistically assume that the qualities of what they are studying are quantifiable. A product tends to be convivial to quantifiable measurement more so than a process. That is, whenever there is grading by the point system, it is products that are being measured. Ratings blanks are made for published papers and delivered speeches. Likewise, what results from a classroom is more easily quantifiable than what occurs in the classroom. Occurrences and results are obviously both important, but also interrelated. What worries me is that the tendency to resolve quantitatively is de-emphasizing the process element involved in learning speaking. I believe that those who are comfortable in responding both to student and pedagogical issues by commenting on them are more likely to address process issues than those who habitually prefer the use of numbers. Essays in journals and responsive commentary to students can engage the subtleties of the learning process in ways that numbers cannot.

My goal is not to abolish the option of a product or a product element in the teaching of speech. What I would like to see is the expanding of the process option for the speech student, the development of a learning context in which the development of topics through the spoken equivalent of freewriting would replace last-minute "picking" of topics; in which the "revision" process of writing would occur in preparation for and reflection on, delivered speeches; in which student-teacher interaction would maintain a sense of authorship on the part of the student; in which peer response is viewed as equally important to teacher response; and, in which the content,

form, and nature of the spoken communication utterance are determined by student need rather than by prescription and formula. Obviously, these are long-term goals, but I have seen the process approach to teaching public speaking work in Dean Travis' classroom and in my own.

The best way to advance the process option pedagogy is for those engaged in research in its broadest sense--observing, explaining, hypothesizing, and defending--to begin to write about, talk about, and conduct experiments in the process option, always with the aid of our strong allies, our students.

NOTES

[1] Nancy Jones, Research on Writing (8W:245), The University of Iowa, Spring, 1984.

[2] "The tendency is ... present for the current movement toward informalized (open) education to rigidify programmatically around 'activity' or 'learning centers,' 'learning conferences,' 'the integrated day,' 'open space.'" Patricia Carini, Observation and Description: An Alternative Methodology for the Investigation of Human Phenomena (Grand Forks, N.D.: Center for Teaching and Learning, University of North Dakota, 1975; Distributed through ERIC #127277), p. 1.

[3] Nancy Sommers, "Revision Strategies of Student Writers and Experienced Adult Writers," College Composition and Communication, 31 (December 1980), 378-88.

[4] Roland Barthes, "Writers, Intellectuals, Teachers," from Image-Music-Text, reprinted in A Barthes Reader, ed. Susan Sontag (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux), p. 379.

[5] Barthes, p. 380.

[6] Barthes, p. 380.

[7] Barthes, p. 381.

[8] Sommers, p. 379.

[9] For suggestions on applying process theory to speech practice, see Mary S. Piccirillo and Bonnie Wiehardt,

"Speech as Process," The Rhetoric Program, University of Iowa, 1983.

[10] Donald C. Bryant, "The Role of Rigor in the Teaching of Speech," Communication Education, formerly Speech Teacher, 1 (February, 1952), 20.

[11] Bryant, p. 21.

[12] Bryant, p. 22.

[13] Bryant, p. 22.

[14] James Britton, The Development of Writing Abilties (Urbana, Illinois: NCTE, 1977), p. 197.

[15] James Britton, Language and Learning (London: Allen Lane, 1970), p. 179.

[16] Donald Murray, Write to Learn (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1984), p. 7.

[17] Peter Elbow, Writing With Power (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 302.

[18] A reference to Thomas Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962).

[19] Maxine Hairston, "The Winds of Change: Thomas Kuhn and the Revolution in the Teaching of Writing," College Composition and Communication, 33 (February 1982), 76-88.

[20] Carini, p. 1.

[21] Douglas M. Trank, "An Overview of Present Approaches to the Basic Speech Communication Course," Speech Communication Association Convention, Washington, D. C., 12 November 1983), p. 3.

[22] Trank, p. 5.